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ABSTRACT

Outcomes of the School-Based Instructional Leadership (SBIL) program are described in this paper. The goal of the program is to empower school leadership teams (which include administrators, teachers, and representatives of stakeholder groups) for new roles and relationships as they implement a school-development process within their own contexts. This paper describes the team-training sessions, content of the training handbook, training formats, and the training of trainers. Between June 1991 and August 1992, 909 educators and stakeholders participated directly in hands-on utilization of SBIL. Initial findings indicate that the program has achieved results related to each of the following program objectives: (1) develop skills and attitudes for shared leadership; (2) synthesize fragmented efforts around a familiar framework; (3) build internal capacity for dissemination and follow-up; (4) provide a readiness base for more ambitious or extensive restructuring efforts; and (5) facilitate collaboration among school-improvement facilitators and higher education. Data from a follow-up study, training evaluation forms, and anecdotal reports suggest that clients are highly satisfied with both the training content and format. (Contains 23 references.) (LMI)

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SCHOOL-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

A Staff Development Program for School Effectiveness and Improvement

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Many schools rushing to restructure are neglecting the solid knowledge base that has been developed from school and teacher effectiveness research. Districts often fail to build support and readiness for new roles and responsibilities and to provide training and assistance to enable teachers and others to share leadership and actually improve their schools.

Important findings from descriptions of successful practice and studies of effective schools, effective instruction, and organizational change have been presented in numerous sources. They have created keen interest in the internal renewal of our educational institutions. Unfortunately, many questions about how to transfer those findings into practice in schools remain unanswered.

Purpose

The underlying mission of the National Center for Effective Schools (NCES) is to build district and school motivation and capacity to implement and sustain meaningful school improvement so that quality and equity are present in educational programs for all children. The related goal of the School-Based Instructional Leadership (SBIL) program is to empower school leadership teams (which include administrators, teachers and representatives of stakeholder groups) for new roles and relationships as they implement a process of school improvement within their own context. It is a quantum leap in development from listing characteristics associated with improved student achievement (such as instructional leadership and a shared sense of mission) to designing and delivering a step-by-step "how-to" implementation process which will enable schools to make mission-oriented, data-supported decisions that actually achieve greater effectiveness. Even more challenging is to make this training and technical assistance clear and practical, at the same time limiting it to the processes of decision-making and problem-solving while avoiding the temptations and requests to prescribe solutions. Specific objectives of SBIL and the strategies designed to address them include:

1. To develop skills and attitudes for shared leadership. The identification of cross-role leadership teams as the intended audience for SBIL provides an opportunity for team-building and development of a common language and shared experience base. The session devoted to teamwork deals with characteristics of an effective team, stages of group development, dealing with difficult people, and technical skills for teamwork. The balance between instructional input, reading and reflection, active audience participation and group simulations mirrors the need to hear and affirm the contributions of all members (Fullan, 1991; Taylor & Levine, 1991).

2. To synthesize fragmented efforts around a familiar framework. Throughout SBIL, the emphasis is on setting priorities that reflect the essential mission of the school. The intent is not to diagnose and prescribe solutions, but to provide skills and develop the confidence of leadership teams to coordinate activities that will successfully guide their own stakeholders to a recognition of needs for change, study of alternative solutions, and identification of strategies most suitable for their context and concerns.

3. To build internal capacity for dissemination and follow-up. The Training of Trainers component of SBIL is designed to develop additional skills for selected individuals who will provide training within their districts or educational agencies, and maintain close contact for further technical assistance during the implementation process.

4. To provide a readiness base for more ambitious or extensive restructuring efforts. By developing a common language and process, SBIL enables school leaders and stakeholders to build confidence and commitment to working together. As trust and experience develop, school improvement objectives and action plans become more comprehensive and focus more on the teaching and learning functions of the school.

5. To facilitate collaboration among school improvement facilitators and higher education. Feedback received from participants and information gathered through Trainer's Reports generates additional questions for applied research and opportunities to disseminate findings from current studies.

Development

The scope and sequence of SBIL was identified from several bodies of literature and research, including studies of school effectiveness (Holcomb, 1991b, Session 1), staff development design (Garmston, 1992; Joyce, 1990), organizational development (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Schein, 1985; Taylor & Levine, 1991), and educational change (Fullan, 1991; Louis & Miles, 1990). Extensive dialogue and interaction with experienced school improvement practitioners helped focus on the most helpful findings and key concepts needed by school leaders ready to initiate school improvement efforts.

The first version of SBIL was tested in the field as content for workshops in school districts in the Midwest. The entire sequence of nine sessions (listed below) was delivered to teachers and principals in Oregon, Wisconsin, during the developmental stages and specific feedback from each session helped to shape its completion. Fifteen associates of the center, including superintendents, principals, teachers and state department of education specialists, received and reviewed copies of the Participant's Notebook, providing feedback and input for further refinement. In addition, professional reviews were completed by Laraine Roberts of the California School Leadership Academy and Pam Robbins, professional development presenter for ASCD and educational consultant. The revised materials were first implemented in a national Training Institute held in Madison in June of 1991.

Team Training Component

The Participant's Notebook for SBIL includes handouts, materials for group activities, and a set of current resource readings drawn from books and journals not readily available to parents and teachers. Containing a total of 595 pages of original and selected materials, the Participant's Notebook is more than a training tool. It represents a substantial collection of resource materials for future reference and duplication as school improvement teams return to their own districts and schools and replicate the activities they simulated in the professional development environment. Content is organized in nine sessions which address the following topics and subtopics.

Exploring the Research and Process
- The Original Effective Schools Research Base
- Definition and Evidence of Effectiveness
- Questions of Quality and Equity
- An Overview of the School Improvement Process

Examining Effective Schools
- Current and Emerging Issues in School Effectiveness
- Clear and Focused Mission
- Instructional Leadership
- Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task
- High Expectations for Student Success
- Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
- Safe and Orderly Environment
- Positive Home-School Relations

Defining District and School Roles and Responsibilities
- Central Office Roles and Responsibilities
- The District Steering Committee
- Building-Level Roles and Responsibilities
- Forming the School Improvement Team

Improving Schools through Teamwork
- Characteristics of an Effective Team
- Stages of Group Development
- Dealing with Difficult People
- Technical Skills for Team Work

Affirming Mission and Beliefs
- Purposes of a Mission
- Analysis of Mission Statements
- Developing a Mission Statement
- Living Out the Mission

Gathering, Analyzing and Reporting Data
- Planning Data Collection and Use
- Analyzing Student Outcomes
- Data Disaggregation
- Analyzing Perceptions of School Characteristics
- Developing the School Status Report

Identifying Improvement Objectives and Selecting Strategies
- Prioritizing Statements of Concern
- Writing Precise Improvement Objectives
- Examining Effective Curriculum and Instructional Strategies Related to the Improvement Objectives
- Considering Current Practice and Constraints
- Selecting Strategies for Change

Developing and Implementing the School Improvement Plan
- Action Planning for Selected Strategies
- Integrating Staff Development with School Improvement Objectives
- Establishing Indicators of Progress
- Coordinating the Master School Improvement Plan

Creating Change in the School Culture
Analyzing the School Culture
The Impact of Change
Obstacles to Improvement
Meeting the Challenges
Building Networks of Support
Celebration and Renewal

These nine sessions closely parallel the activities recommended in a continuous process of school improvement, beginning with the need to explore research and build a common knowledge base and language for future work (Schein, 1985). Session 1 serves very well as an orientation that can be presented for groups of administrators, teachers, other school staff, parents and community groups. It includes a cooperative learning activity in which participants collectively examine the findings from 19 selected research studies by forming expert groups to read and reflect, and then sharing their knowledge with a home group.

The second session takes a more in-depth look at factors that relate to school effectiveness and improvement, known as the correlates of effective schools: clear and focused mission, instructional leadership, high expectations for student success, safe and orderly environment, opportunity to learn and time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, and positive home-school relations. Participants analyze and apply this content by preparing group presentations which they will have ready to share with their schools and districts as they build a common knowledge base in the initiation stage.

In Session 3, school improvement teams begin to identify issues that will need to be addressed in each location as the roles and responsibilities of the district and individual schools are defined (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Teddlie, Kirby, & Stringfield, 1989; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1985). Guidelines and rationale for composition and selection of members of the district-level steering committee and school improvement team are provided (Holcomb, 1990a).

The session on teamwork overviews methods of decision-making and introduces several group processes for future use in the school improvement process. An awareness of stages of group development helps prepare participants for changes and challenges that will be faced, and specific strategies for meeting them are outlined (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Miller, 1982; Schein, 1985; Taylor, 1984).

During the fifth session participants come to realize the impact of the beliefs (spoken or unspoken) held by school personnel on their daily behavior and on their readiness to change in response to student needs. While training is provided in the group process needed to articulate a school's mission, the emphasis is on diagnosing the degree to which policies, procedures, and practices are consistent with the words and intent of their written statements (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1987). The role of the school leadership team in modeling desired attitudes and behaviors is stressed and specific activities are planned to assure consistent focus on the preferred norms of the school culture throughout the school year.

In Session 6, participating teams explore a variety of types of data which may be gathered on student outcomes, both academic and affective, and on perceptions of the school by stakeholder groups. They discuss ways of reporting and using such data in decision-making. Work time is provided either to develop a plan for gathering and collecting the types of information that will be most helpful in light of their own context

and concerns, or for discussing previously compiled data and developing summaries for use in reports and meetings of stakeholders (Argyris, 1982; Neale, Bailey, & Ross, 1981).

Sessions 7 and 8 actively engage school improvement teams in simulation of processes they will not complete on their own in the training context, but will facilitate with their school's staff and stakeholder groups. These range from a nominal group process for generating concerns and focusing priorities, to formation of task forces and development of specific action plans for implementation. Through these activities, it becomes apparent that the school improvement process is not merely an end in itself, but provides a framework that can accommodate the integration of major initiatives such as the Comer School Development Model, Outcome-Based Education, principles from Sizer's Essential Schools or techniques from Total Quality Management (Taylor, 1990).

Session 9 assists participants in analyzing their local school and district culture so they can identify factors that may inhibit change and be proactive in addressing them, while giving equal attention to reinforcement and maintenance of positive factors that will facilitate the improvement process (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Purkey & Smith, 1983).

Training Formats

SBIL was intentionally designed to be deliverable in several formats. Each session can be presented independently as a topical workshop, with its specific design application based on the stage of readiness or implementation that exists in the district or state. The most popular format in terms of time and cost effectiveness has been presentation of all nine sessions in a week-long Training Institute. In this format, the sequence described here is followed, and the session on school culture provides a bridge from the Institute setting to application in specific contexts.

Another format is to distribute the professional development experiences throughout a school year. The first three or four sessions are presented in the late summer or early fall. Time is provided for schools to identify their teams, who then participate in the workshop on teamwork. More time may elapse while mission statements are being developed. About midyear, teams receive training on the use of data, and are charged with gathering and analyzing specific information related to the individual school. In early spring, teams learn to facilitate the processes of identifying objectives and developing action plans, and these steps are taken in preparation for implementation in the fall of the second year. When this format is used, the major change in sequence concerns the session on analyzing school culture. It is moved forward and provided early in the process, so participants are aware that their activities may challenge existing norms and, if effective over the long-term, will results in changes in the school culture (Purkey & Smith, 1983; Vaill, 1989).

Training of Trainers Component

School districts and state departments of education are faced with constraints in terms of staff time and financial resources and need efficient, cost-effective ways of providing professional development. At the same time, research on effective staff development demonstrates the need for common language, shared experience, and adaptation of objectives and materials to the specific context (Schein, 1985). To address these constraints and findings, a Training of Trainers component was developed to make SBIL widely available and accessible to committed educators and stakeholders across the country. With the assistance of Pam Robbins, best known for her work with peer

coaching, content for Training of Trainers has been developed to enable schools, districts, state departments of education and other education agencies to build their own internal capacity for training and technical assistance. Besides being more cost-effective, on-site facilitators can provide a level of follow-up and understanding of the specific context that increases the likelihood of successful implementation and continuous improvement over the time needed for lasting change.

The Trainer's Notebook provides a total of 641 pages. It includes detailed trainer's notes and timelines for each session, 309 masters from which to develop slides or overhead transparencies, lists of needed materials and recommended videotapes, and a set of supplementary resource readings. Topics and subtopics include:

Understanding Adult Learners
- Principles of Adult Learning
- Matching Staff Development to Adult Needs

Generating Feedback on Training
- Clarifying Expectations
- Designing Evaluation

Establishing Successful Beginnings
- Planning
- Room Arrangement
- Developing Rapport
- Warm-Up Activities

Designing Effective Presentations
- Graphics as Tools
- Presentation Design
- Presentation Congruence
- Accommodating Modality Preferences of the Learners
- Active Participation
- Stories and Metaphors

Coping with Training Challenges
- Relaxing Yourself
- Dealing with Participant Hostility

Coaching for Training Impact
- Providing Helpful Feedback
- The Preconference
- The Postconference

Providing Follow-up for Implementation
- Practice Pays Off
- Support and Problem-Solving
- Celebrating Success

Matching Training Approaches to Context
- The "Nested" Model (Sparks, 1983)
- Context Variables in the School Culture

Utilization of SBIL

Between June, 1991 and August, 1992, 909 educators and stakeholders representing schools, districts, state departments of education, and other educational agencies have been directly involved in hands-on utilization of SBIL. Whether teams attend the annual Training Institutes held in Madison, or sponsor training in their own regions, the content and format are constantly altered to reflect the unique needs of the participating schools. As noted below, a goal of SBIL is to provide a framework for change that can respond to and integrate state, local and national initiatives. In Florida sessions were redesigned to match state legislation on school-based management. Sessions on the use of data were modified for Kentucky participants to provide hands-on practice with the data analyzed by the Kentucky Department of Education, so teams could both prepare plans to meet state mandates and be ready to share the data analysis with their constituents. When school improvement facilitators in the Commonwealth of Virginia faced the dilemma of maintaining viable, current efforts in the context of a crusade for total quality management, a session was customized to show the similarities in beliefs and implementation steps between the two. This enabled school leaders to sustain their efforts without fragmentation.

In addition to direct involvement with practitioners in the education community, training and technical assistance based on SBIL has been shared by other agencies and the university. Having developed a set of videotapes about effective schools and school improvement, the Agency for Instructional Technology, an Indiana-based firm, realized the need to assist its member states and provinces with their utilization. NCES has provided ongoing feedback and design input to their materials, and created a collaborative training and technical assistance project utilizing SBIL concepts and materials with the new technology.

Results

The dissemination and utilization of SBIL has achieved results related to each of the objectives described above.

1. To develop skills and attitudes for shared leadership. School leaders throughout the United States and from Guam, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia have experienced training for their roles in school leadership. From June, 1991, through August, 1992, over 900 central office administrators, principals, teachers, staff members and community representatives have worked and learned together. A variety of immediate outcomes by the end of the training sessions have included plans for gathering survey data from stakeholder groups, planning readiness activities for initiation, drafting School Board policy to support school-based improvement, and developing data displays, mission statements, improvement objectives, and tentative school improvement plans. All products developed during the Training Institutes themselves are emphatically described as "rough," "tentative," and "draft" to stress that they are the result of a team practicing the process, and will be verified, revised or completely replaced through the involvement of stakeholders at the school site.

To document long-range results of implementation at local sites after the training and initiation stage, a three-year follow-up study is being conducted. Participants in this first year of utilization of SBIL are being surveyed to gauge progress in their schools and districts. Products of their efforts, including mission statements, data profiles, improvement objectives and action plans are being collected. Second- and third-year surveys will be conducted in 1993 and 1994.

Data from the first stage of this study indicate that 90% of the schools participating in SBIL now have school improvement teams formed and meeting on a regular basis. In 87% of the schools reporting, a mission statement has been developed utilizing a group process that involves staff and stakeholders reaching consensus on their primary purpose. This level of implementation is consistent with findings on educational change (Fullan, 1991; Louis & Miles, 1990; Tyler, 1987) which suggest that a minimum of five to seven years is needed to completely implement an innovation and have it become institutionalized as standard practice in the organization. Over 78.3% of participants responding have been involved in setting improvement objectives in their schools. More than 20 schools in Wisconsin, Louisiana, Iowa, Virginia, and Florida have moved into further stages of implementation, including development of specific strategies and action plans.

Responses to open-ended questions about perceived changes in attitudes and practices on the part of staff and stakeholders credit the training and technical assistance provided through SBIL with stimulating greater teacher involvement in decision-making, increased use of data to guide discussions and planning, a level of genuine excitement and enthusiasm about teacher empowerment, increased activities between students and teachers across grade levels, implementation of new teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, and increases in the amount and types of parent involvement. With regard to student outcomes, quantitative data is limited after just one year, but school leaders report increased student motivation and attendance, and reduced disruption and discipline. Respondents link this change in student attitudes and behavior to more positive expectations from teachers and more involvement of student representatives in the leadership of the school.

2. To synthesize fragmented efforts around a familiar framework. As states continue to mandate school reform initiatives, the flexible design of SBIL has made it possible to customize training to enable leaders at the state, district and school level to synthesize their own goals and needs with external demands. With the focus on decision-making activities, SBIL was used to assist Florida teams in addressing school-based management legislation. For teams in Kentucky, the content was modified to match the initiatives of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. School leaders in Louisiana and staff members in the Departments of Education in Arkansas and Virginia have found that SBIL has been valuable and consistent with implementation of state school improvement efforts funded through Chapter II for identified target schools.

3. To build internal capacity for dissemination and follow-up. Forty-two participants have received additional Training of Trainers and are actively engaged and available to provide follow-up and technical assistance to school leadership teams.

4. To provide a readiness base for more ambitious or extensive restructuring efforts. School leaders who were involved in the early stages of SBIL development and training have moved from fairly straightforward objectives such as improving school climate and discipline, to implementing outcome-based education and incorporating principles of total quality management. They have reported that their early school improvement efforts served as a "launch pad" for more comprehensive approaches that they would not have attempted earlier.

5. To facilitate collaboration among school improvement facilitators and higher education. Needs expressed by participants have guided selection of topics for publications and occasional papers ranging from total quality management in educational settings to new forms of authentic assessment to multicultural considerations in

curriculum and instruction. Unanswered questions have become part of proposals for further study and development. Opportunities to present SBIL at conferences (including the National Association for Elementary School Principals, The American Association of School Administrators, AERA, and the International Congress on School Effectiveness and Improvement) and within university courses and seminars have strengthened the link between research and practice.

Reactions

Reactions of participants in SBIL are gathered in several ways. Evaluation forms are used during and at the conclusion of Training Institutes to provide feedback and suggestions for further improvement. The follow-up study described above provides information on actual changes in practice in schools and districts.

Participants who have completed Training of Trainers and are assisting school improvement teams in their schools, districts or states submit Trainer's Reports of their activities. They report that utilization of group activities included in SBIL has enabled them to confront long-standing problems and resolve pre-existing conflicts as part of their school improvement programs. Anecdotal reports of implementation success are frequently received through unsolicited telephone calls and letters of appreciation.

Clients report a high degree of satisfaction with both the content and format of the training. They find it practical and realistic, and comment on its flexibility to respond to their own needs and demands. Participants have praised the hands-on, interactive approach, saying, "I can take what I've gotten and use it right away." SBIL has been utilized in the School Improvement divisions of the Virginia and Arkansas Departments of Education. They report that their school teams have left Training Institutes "with both the will and skill to tackle important challenges." The following statements represent common reactions from other participants in SBIL training and implementation:

"I couldn't believe I learned so much from our community people and the students. They understand my job a lot more than I thought they did." -- Kentucky participant.

"I wish I had all of this in my hip pocket when we started the SHAL program in St. Louis. We would have been up and running in no time." -- Rufus Young, Assistant Superintendent, St. Louis, MO.

"I've been helping to implement the Effective Schools process in Connecticut for ten years or more, and yet I found new pieces of information and inspiration each day of the training conference. We've been so busy in Connecticut that I'm afraid we are a bit behind the state-of-the-art training techniques. What they are doing now is extremely exciting." --Joan Shoemaker, Bureau of School and Program Development, Connecticut Department of Education.

"I have learned a great bit about the concepts behind the Effective Schools process. I knew a good deal about training and facilitating before I came to the conference. Now I believe I can put the two together. I can connect all the pieces and form a comprehensive whole. The modules will be handy references and resources when we try to make the process work." -- Mary Kay Butterfield, Pennsylvania.

"The most helpful part was hearing of past experiences of those who have covered some of the hurdles ... Listing ideas for future use with faculty was most helpful. This will give direction for our sharing." -- Team members, St. Charles Parish, Louisiana.

"Practitioners have been sharing craft knowledge about how to create effective schools for over a decade. Now we have the Effective Schools process encapsulated in School-Based Instructional Leadership professional development modules. I see a new era in staff development dawning." -- Barbara O. Taylor, consultant on Effective Schools Research.

"School-Based Instructional Leadership raised issues that are being addressed continually ... we have formed improvement teams and are restructuring some of our central office roles." -- Curriculum specialist, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

"The School-Based Instructional Leadership program offers school leaders an opportunity to develop a repertoire of skills that will enable them to formulate a comprehensive picture of their schools and build the momentum and commitment to improve and enhance the school's effectiveness. The flexibility of this approach allows teams to design and implement strategies tailored to the unique needs of their individual school. Through this highly interactive, multimedia program, people learn about themselves, build trust in each other, and develop a network of support which extends beyond the training." -- Pam Robbins, Educational Consultant, Napa, CA.

For more information about training opportunities in School-Based Instructional Leadership, contact the National Center for Effective Schools, 1025 W. Johnson Street, Room 685, Madison, WI 53706, (608) 263-4730, FAX (608) 263-6448.

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